

STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITY OF BOSTON WINTER 1993-94

**ANNUAL HOMELESS CENSUS REPORT
JANUARY 6, 1994**



THOMAS M. MENINO, MAYOR

EMERGENCY SHELTER COMMISSION

**KELLEY CRONIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
REVEREND BERNARD MCLAUGHLIN, (CHAIR) CROSSROADS FAMILY SHELTER
RICHARD RING, PINE STREET INN
MICHAEL MCGUIRE, HOMELESS PERSON
BARBARA BLAKENEY, REGISTERED NURSE
PATRICK MCGUIGAN, PUBLIC FACILITIES**

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

ALLAN K. STERN, DIRECTOR

STATEMENT OF
MAYOR THOMAS M. MENINO
RESULTS OF HOMELESS CENSUS
JANUARY 6, 1994

As we move deeper into the winter months, the plight of the homeless deepens as well. The information we obtained from the homeless census will be used to, first, account for all of Boston's homeless persons; and second, to ensure that these needy individuals receive the most basic of human necessities--- shelter, a hot meal and a warm bed.

This year's survey shows that while Boston is far ahead of many other cities in its capacity to provide basic shelter, food and transportation to people in need, there is still much more to be done beyond shelter, as we seek new partnerships for affordable housing, for job training, and for needed care for the homeless mentally ill. And while we are taking steps forward with a new job training program taking shape at Long Island Shelter and today's opening of a six unit lodging house for homeless mentally ill women, we need to be making leaps forward. For this, we will need the help of the federal and state governments, the private sector, and our neighbors throughout Massachusetts and the country.

If every one of Massachusetts' 351 cities and towns built one six unit facility for the homeless mentally ill, like the one we are opening in Fields Corner today, and one six unit facility for families in need, or for single adults, we could make huge progress in addressing homelessness in Massachusetts. Cities like Boston can and will continue to do the heavy lifting on behalf of our neediest citizens, but it is time that every community in this state and nation, especially those receiving federal or state aid, stepped forward.

It is important to remember that providing the homeless with shelter and a meal amounts to little more than putting a band-aid on a mortal wound. The City of Boston is working hard to move the homeless beyond shelters and into permanent housing.

Long Island Shelter was recently awarded a federal grant to create jobs and job training for their homeless guests. These efforts-- job training, education, and adequate support services-- are the essential elements needed to move the homeless beyond shelters and into permanent housing.

Efforts like these are where I plan to put my energies as Mayor of Boston. We need to move Boston's homeless beyond shelter and into housing, and give them educational and job training opportunities.

I want to thank the more than one hundred volunteers-- including members of City Year, city employees, and concerned residents-- who came out on this cold winter night to provide this very important service to the homeless. In the truest spirit of this holiday season, your actions send a message of compassion, caring and commitment to the poor and needy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.) The overall homeless population increased by 9% , from 4,411 last year to 4,809 this year. This was due to a stabilization of the amount of homeless single adults but an increase in the amount of homeless families.
- 2.) The number of homeless families increased by 91.7% this year. Last year there were 21 men, 290 women and 522 children in emergency shelter placements for families. This year there were 38 men, 544 women and 1018 children in emergency shelter placements for families.
- 3.) There was a 95% increase in the amount of homeless children in emergency family shelter this year compared to last.
- 4.) The amount of homeless men and women in adult shelters was about the same for the second year in a row. There were 1,953 men and women in adult shelter last year compared to 1,932 men and women in adult shelter last year.
- 5.) There was a 27% decrease in the homeless men and women in State detox programs this year compared to last. There was a 45% decrease in the homeless men and women in State mental health programs this year compared to last. This despite the fact that there is as much of a need for such services among homeless men and women this year compared to last.

THIS YEAR'S CENSUS

HISTORY

The first census of Boston's homeless population was conducted in 1983 by six volunteers working over a period of two weeks. The study was the City's first attempt to identify the size of the street problem associated with homelessness. This beginning work on counting the homeless inspired later projects which provided a clearer picture of the scope of the homeless population in the City of Boston. The study has grown to include over one hundred volunteers working with the coordinated efforts of government agencies and dozens of non-profit service organizations.

Mayor Menino has directed appropriate City agencies and sought help from outside service providers to conduct the census for the last six years. He has stated that the importance of the study should not be diminished by time, and, as a result, the City will continue to conduct it annually.

PURPOSE

It is the experience of many expert observers that government agencies are rarely prepared to address important service delivery matters when they are not aware of the scope of the problems they are confronting. The homeless problem is one such issue. Prior to conducting our first study, some estimates varied by as much as ten thousand people. With these "guesses" the City could not adequately prepare for the necessary shelter space, medical attention, food and transportation resources for the homeless population within its borders.

Since the census' inception, Mayor Menino has made a commitment that no individual in the City of Boston will go without a bed in a warm place, transportation to shelter, food and quality medical care simply because they are poor. The annual homeless census informs the Mayor as to what resources he will need to acquire in order to meet that commitment. The City of Boston also uses census results to help in all of its applications for funding, and to assist in understanding what the needs are for different types of housing.

METHODOLOGY

THE SHELTER POPULATION

Approximately one month prior to the actual census taking, Boston's Emergency Shelter Commission mailed an advisory to all of the city's public and private shelter providers to inform them of the study. These letters were succeeded by follow-up telephone calls. They are told which day the census will be taken (a day expected to be cold enough for those homeless to seek refuge in a shelter,) how the survey will be conducted, and a request for volunteers. They are asked to tabulate the population of the shelter on the night of the count. The City's Emergency Shelter Commission telephones each shelter on the day following the count to calculate the total from the previous night/morning.

THE STREET POPULATION

The City is divided into thirty-eight separate entities for the purpose of the census. The areas are created as such so that they are small enough to be thoroughly covered by foot. To ensure that the volunteers have a list of possible "homeless places to stay" in each area, a questionnaire is distributed in advance to a variety of resources including, but not limited to, neighborhood representatives, individuals who work with the homeless, etc.. These people provide the City with crucial information which identify specific areas where homeless people have been known to frequent. These designations can be as large as the end of a subway station or as small as under a box in an alley. The City makes sure that all of these identifiable areas are closely monitored during the evening.

The only exception to the strategy identified above is that some of the teams travel by car. These are areas of the City where there have historically been few homeless individuals identified and where the neighborhood is too large to cover by foot. In such cases, volunteers get out of their vehicle and conduct the census by foot in business communities which have a higher likelihood of homeless individuals.

All teams receive Walkie-Talkies to facilitate communication during the evening. This is required to guarantee the volunteers' safety and to call in for shelter pick-ups for homeless individuals unaware of transportation pick-up locations throughout the City.

THE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are recruited from the various shelters throughout the City, the clergy, neighborhood residents, City employees, and City Year volunteers. This is an important element of the process because people who work with this population can help us avoid stereotyping which is often associated with homelessness. Volunteers usually work about two hours in the early morning. We conduct the study at this time in order to ensure that businesses or other places of temporary refuge (like the MBTA) are closed. Also, the study is conducted early in the week, as there seems to be less foot traffic at this time.

Volunteers are always asked to wear warm clothing, inasmuch as the time of the census is selected based on the belief that it will be cold enough to identify the population that is exposed to the elements and readily in need of temporary shelter. This year the temperature dropped well below freezing.

Volunteers are asked to denote people by the following identifiable factors:

1. Is the individual definitely or possibly homeless ?
People who have a place to go often appear not to. If it is unclear in specific situations, volunteers are asked to record these individuals as "possible." The city includes people listed as "possible" in the count presented in this document.
2. Is the individual a man, women or child ?
Since gender and age difference often require different services, this observation is important.
3. Is the individual in need of medical attention ?
Boston City Hospital provides service to indigent patients as a matter of course.
4. Does the individual need transportation to shelter ?
While vans comb the city at night, some individuals may be unable to find a ride or may be unaware of these services.

Volunteers are requested not to ask individuals anything other than the questions raised above. It is not the City's intent to violate anyone's right to privacy. Our expressed purpose is simply to determine the size of the homeless population in Boston. As a result, this study is conducted with complete anonymity.

POPULATION OF THE STREET

<i>POPULATION OF THE STREET</i>	
<i>Winter 1992-93</i>	<i>Winter 1993-94</i>

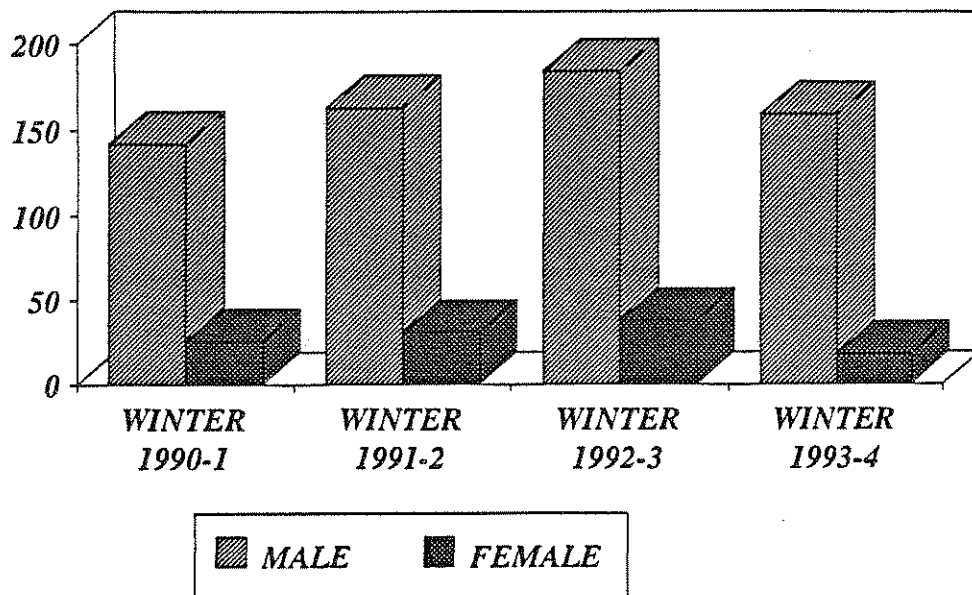
There were 193 men and women on the streets of Boston on the night of December 13, 1993. This count is a decrease of 13% from the 222 individuals counted last year, but even with the year before. Fortunately, again, no children were identified in the street count.

The street population is a mobile one. While all steps are taken to limit double counting, there may be some inherent error factor associated with counting this particular population. On the other hand, it would be impossible to count every individual living on the streets. Many may be found in abandoned buildings, parked cars, or other areas which would be unsafe for volunteers to search. Therefore, any potential implied or real error associated with the street count is understood to be invariably small.

Many homeless men and women who sleep on the streets are mentally ill and in need of services. Their condition has often deteriorated to the point where they are too paranoid to go into shelters and afraid of the people who offer them help on the street. Clearly these people are in need of inpatient services.

Many of the men and women on the street were wrapped in sleeping bags and blankets given to them by outreach workers from Pine Street Inn and Long Island Shelter. The outreach van workers distribute blankets to

POPULATION OF THE STREET



people on the streets who will not go into shelters. One of the important outcomes of the street count is that individuals who are found are offered transportation to shelter.

Unfortunately, despite the offers and availability of shelter, many individuals, some due to mental illness, choose to remain on the street.

THE ADULT SHELTERS

	<i>ADULT SHELTERS</i>			
	Winter 1992-1993		Winter 1993-1994	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Pine Street Inn:	645	100	298	
Fort Point			275	
Women's Inn				94
St. Paul's			45	
Night Center	60	12	58	7
Long Island:	295	38	266	37
Woods-Mullen	162	56	141	52
LIS Annex	103		98	
Rosie's Place		20		20
Shattuck	144	12	170	11
Positive Lifestyles	121			
Sancta Maria		10		4
Veterans	165		141	
Betty's Place		5		17
United Homes			68	
Kingston			35	
YMCA			50	
HCH			40	5
Sub-totals:	1695	253	1685	247
Total:	1948		1932	

The amount of homeless men and women in adult shelters has stabilized over the past few years. There is a small decrease of 1% between last year and this year.

Last year there were 21 men, 290 women and 522 children staying in family shelters, hotels or motels. This year there were 38 men, 541 women and 1018 children staying in family shelters, hotel/motel or scattered sites. The amount of homeless people in families has increased by 91.7 % between this year and last.

The good news is that the State has increased its capacity to provide emergency shelter to families who need it. The Department of Public Welfare is sheltering homeless families in scattered-site apartments. This is a cheaper and more humane way to provide shelter to families than placing them in hotels and motels.

The bad news is that the need for sheltering homeless families has increased so dramatically that the State has had to increase its emergency shelter capacity for families. In 1993, the average family was homeless between 7-10 months before they found permanent housing. Five years ago a family was only homeless for a few weeks before they could find permanent housing.

Over the past three years the State has cut its rental assistance program by over 40% resulting in fewer housing subsidies for homeless families. This means it takes much longer for a homeless family to get a subsidy and be able to move out of shelter and into housing. The numbers of homeless families are increasing because families are homeless longer, staying in shelters for longer periods of time before they can get permanent housing.

WOMEN IN CRISIS

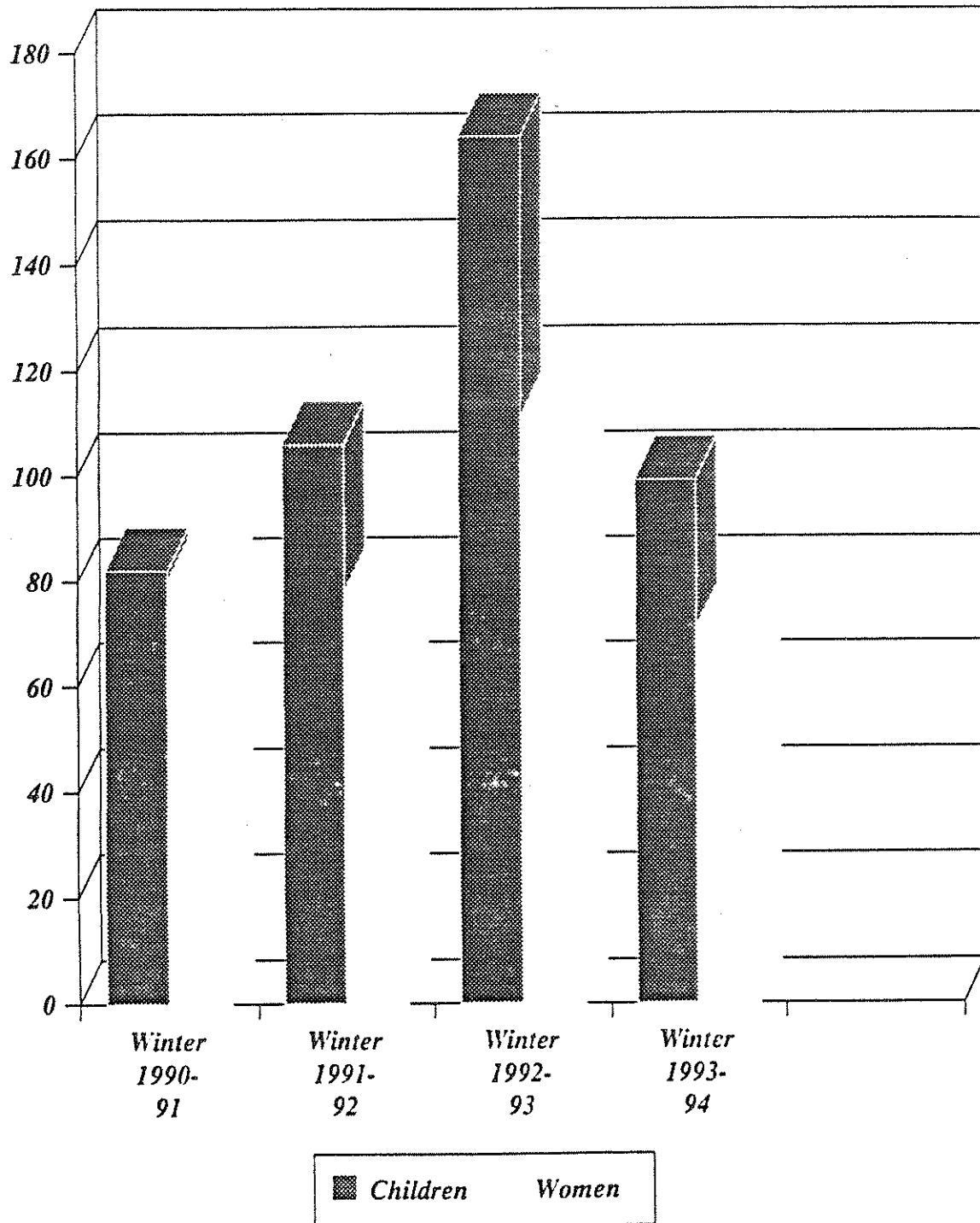
<i>WOMEN IN CRISIS</i>				
	Winter 1992-93		Winter 1993-94	
	Women	Children	Women	Children
Casa Myrna House	30	50	27	41
FINEX	7	7	7	11
Harbor Me	5	10	2	3
Renewai House	30	37	0	0
Eliazabeth Stone House	25	38	23	27
Dove, Inc.	7	12	7	10
Transition House	7	10	5	7
Sub-total:	111	164	71	99
Totals:	275		170	

The number of women and children in Battered Women's Shelters has decreased by 18%, while requests for emergency shelter still exceed the supply. Advocates report that better enforcement of restraining orders have kept the demand from increasing at a higher rate.

There is a time limit, imposed by State funding, that women are allowed to stay in battered women's shelters. Many women end up in emergency shelters when the time limit is out because they have no other housing options. The State needs to work with Battered Women's Shelters to provide housing for women in their programs who have no housing options once their time in the shelter has run out, preventing their release to the shelters or the streets.

Mayor Menino gave higher priority to battered women for section 8 and public housing this fall. This has helped house many battered women and their children.

Women in Crisis Programs



ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS

<i>ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS</i>						
	Winter 1992-93			Winter 1993-94		
	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Bridge Extension1	9	8		9	5	
Bridge-Elliot2		8	13		7	9
Boston Adolescent	2	5		6	5	
Sub-totals:	11	21	13	15	17	9
Totals:	45			41		

HOSPITALS

<i>HOSPITALS</i>				
	Winter 1992-93		Winter 1993-94	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Boston City Hospital	2		7	2
Massachusetts General	2		1	
New England Medical Center	5	2	3	2
University Hospital	1		0	
Sub-totals:	10	2	11	4
Totals:		12		15

This count identifies the size of the homeless population seeking medical treatment on the evening of the count, as well as homeless people seeking shelter in hospital lobbies.

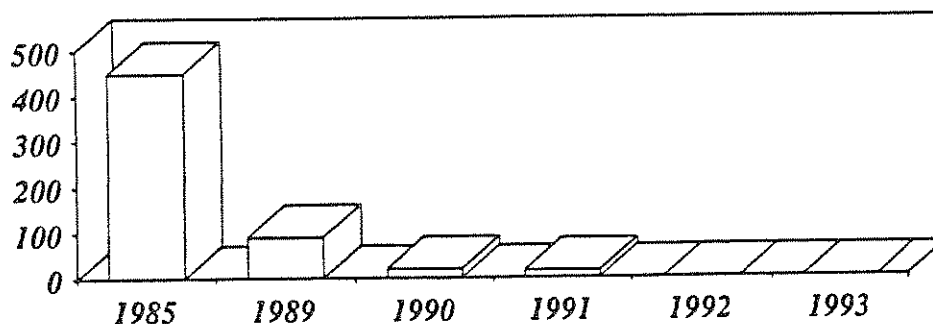
DETOX

	<i>DETOX</i>			
	Winter 1992-93		Winter 1993-94	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Boston Alcohol	25	43	24	8
River Street	9	4	10	8
Andrew Street	19	9	17	6
Dimock Detox.	17	9	7	2
STAIR	31	7	24	5
Bridgewater				
Tewksbury	146		121	
Sub-totals:	247	72	203	29
Totals:	319		232	

On the night of the census there were 232 men and women in detox facilities compared to 319 last year. This represents a decrease of 27%. However, the amount of homeless men and women in need of treatment has not decreased.

The State use to provide 450 detox beds at Bridgewater State Hospital. Those beds have been closed without a replacement. The State needs to come up with a comprehensive approach to providing homeless men and women in need of substance abuse treatment with the long-term comprehensive care they need.

*Reduction in Detox Beds at
Bridgewater State Hospital*



MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

<i>MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES</i>				
	Winter 1992-93		Winter 1993-94	
Mass. Mental Health:	Male	Female	Male	Female
Fenwood Inn	18	21	35	12
Deaconess	24	23	7	2
Lindemann Center	8	5	9	6
Solomon Carter Fuller	46	12	18	6
Bay Cove M.H.	37	16	59	25
Bay View Inn	31	9	34	5
Parker Street Central	30	20	30	19
Parker Street West	14	11		14
Sub-totals:	208	117	192	89
Totals:	517		281	

There were 281 homeless men and women in mental health facilities on the night of the census compared to 325 last year. This is a decrease of 13.5%.

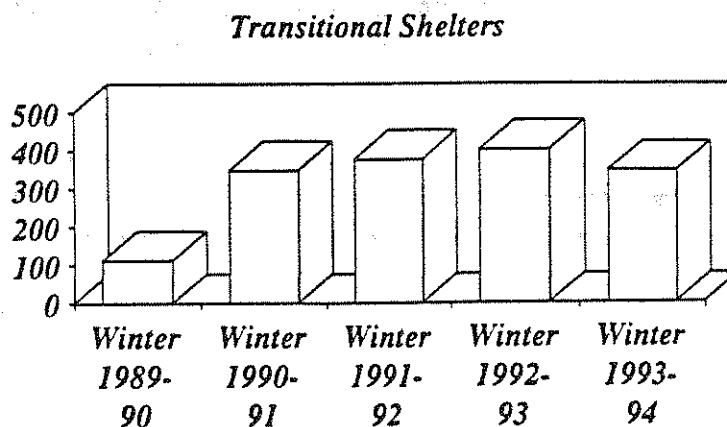
The Department of Mental Health recognizes that they have 1,200 homeless mentally ill clients living on the streets and shelters of Boston, and over 2,000 state-wide. This fiscal year the State increased their budget for housing and providing services to the homeless mentally ill by \$3.6 million. They are hoping to move 200 homeless mentally ill men and women out of the shelter system in Boston and into appropriate settings.

This is a good first step, but the State needs to increase their commitment each year if the problem is to be eliminated. There are a finite number of homeless mentally ill people in Boston. If the State has the will, they can move each and every one of them out of the shelter system and into the continuum of care they so desperately need.

Until this year, of the nine Department of Mental Health regional divisions, only metro-Boston had a plan for housing the homeless mentally ill. The population of homeless mentally ill people exists state-wide and therefore there should be a state-wide housing and service plan for this population. If each of the Department of Mental Health's regional division provided the amount of housing for the homeless mentally ill that metro-Boston provided last year, 900 people would have been housed state-wide. At that rate it would take less than two and a half years to house the 2,000 homeless mentally ill state-wide.

<i>TRANSITIONAL SHELTERS</i>						
	Winter 1992-93			Winter 1993-94		
	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Horizons House		6	9		4	5
Family House	9	9		1	5	8
Kingston House	15					
Women, Inc.		5	7		21	7
One Wise Street	9			8		
Crittenton Hastings Trans:		20	39		27	36
Brookview House		7	13		8	19
Harbor Lights	36	18		17	21	
Mass. Halfway Houses	137	13	33	85	5	24
Elders Living At Home	10	7		9	4	
Portis					7	13
Boston Chil. Serv.					6	7
Sub-totals:	216	85	101	120	108	119
Totals:		402			347	

These and other transitional programs are helping homeless people move from shelters and into permanent housing.



TOTALS

	TOTALS			TOTALS		
	Winter 1992-93			Winter 1993-94		
	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Street Count	184	38		163	31	
Adult Shelters	1,695	253		1,685	247	
Family Shelters	5	166	244	3	147	229
Women in Crisis		111	164		71	99
Adolescent Programs	11	21	13	15	17	9
Hospitals	10	2		11	4	
Detox	247	72		203	29	
Mental Health Facilities	208	117		192	89	
Transitional Shelters	216	85	101	120	108	119
Other	46	124	278	35	394	789
TOTALS:	2,622	989	800	2,427	1,137	1,245
GRAND TOTALS:		4,411			4,809	

The 1993 homeless census has increased by 9%. While the individual homeless adult population has stabilized over the past few years, the homeless family population has sky-rocketed.

Through Boston's efforts to increase the amount of lodging houses we have been able to help stabilize the homeless adult population. Mayor Menino is committed to moving homeless men and women beyond shelter and into job training, educational training and permanent housing.

Boston's Long Island Shelter was just awarded a McKinney grant to further the Mayor's agenda. Homeless men and women will be given job training and transitional shelter beds to move them out of the shelter system and into the mainstream.

We would like to thank the following people for their help on this year's census:

MAYOR'S OFFICE

OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

ANN ROPER

CITY YEAR

INSPECTIONAL SERVICES

PARK RANGERS

DAVID ANDERSON

NANCY BRISTEL

JULIE RIKELMAN